United Nations S/PV.7649

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7649th meeting
Thursday, 17 March 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	China	Mr. Xu Zhongsheng
	Egypt	Mr. Mahmoud
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Gasso Matoses
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mr. Klein
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in Liberia

Thirty-first progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2016/169)

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16-07453 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Liberia

Thirty-first progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2016/169)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Liberia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Liberia; Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; and Mr. Olof Skoog, Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Sweden.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/169, which contains the thirty-first progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zarif.

Mr. Zarif: At this time last year, the National Security Council of Liberia endorsed the Government of Liberia's plan for the transition of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). This marked the beginning of an historic undertaking, led by the Government of Liberia, to assume full responsibility for security by 30 June 2016, in line with the deadline set by the Security Council.

With less than four months remaining, the Government of Liberia has intensified its efforts to implement the plan. Last month, the Government, with UNMIL and other international stakeholders, conducted a stock-taking exercise to assess progress and reprioritize activities within the plan so as to ensure that its most important targets are met by 30 June. Both the Government and UNMIL are confident that, with sustained political commitment, the priority targets of the plan will be achieved. However, more concerted efforts by the executive and legislative branches are required to ensure the urgent enactment and implementation of critical legislation relating to the security sector. In January, after long delays, the Senate approved the draft firearms and ammunition control act, which now remains before the House of Representatives. Other important outstanding legislation, such as the police and immigration service acts, are still pending with the Senate and have yet to be submitted to the House.

The implementation of the plan has been uneven, with a number of activities falling behind schedule. In addition to delays in the passage of legislation, challenges in releasing the necessary Government funding for security transition have been a considerable constraint. Competing priorities for Government spending and the deteriorating economic outlook recently compelled the Government to announce austerity measures and to revise national budget projections downward. While we understand that these revised projections are unlikely to affect the commitments undertaken by the Government with regard to the security transition, there are still major funding gaps for security transition tasks, such as arms inspection or training, and equipment for the Liberia National Fire Service, which will require external support. I appeal to bilateral and multilateral partners to provide support to the security transition, particularly to those activities that enhance public trust and confidence in security sector personnel. Failure to do so may result in a fragile security transition, which could undermine the many gains made in peace consolidation in the country.

Meanwhile, UNMIL has continued to hand over security responsibilities to national security agencies, such as the Liberian National Police, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization and the Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation, including the provision of security at Monrovia Central Prison and the National Palace of Justice in Zwedru, and at one of the country's two airports. The Mission remains engaged with the Liberian security agencies to advance the development of institutional structures and legal frameworks for the justice and security sectors, as well as the establishment of accountability mechanisms. This includes the training and mentoring of their senior management, assisting in the drafting of required legislation, policies and standard operating procedures, supporting the further decentralization of security services at the

regional and county levels, and the establishment of county and district security councils.

In parallel, UNMIL has continued to implement its drawdown plan and the authorized reductions in its military and police personnel, in accordance with resolution 2239 (2015). After the completion of the security transition, UNMIL's residual force and formed police units will be concentrated in and around Monrovia, as well as in Gbarnga and Zwedru. UNMIL will maintain critical enablers to ensure its mobility and quick deployment in support of Liberian security agencies and to protect civilians in the event of a deterioration of the security situation that could threaten a strategic reversal. With the reduction of the military component, the 50 military observers will redeploy in the five UNMIL offices in Gbarnga, Greenville, Harper, Voinjama and Zwedru, and will work closely with the United Nations civilian police and the field support component to perform their duties.

UNMIL has also continued to consolidate its deployments and streamline its activities in line with the mandated tasks. By 30 June, UNMIL will have consolidated its 13 county offices into five regional offices. As part of the consolidation process, we have also proposed a reduction of over 30 per cent in UNMIL's civilian staffing for the 2016-2017 budget cycle. The closure of the field offices has been accompanied by a proactive public information campaign, including the holding of town hall meetings between senior Government officials and local communities. I have personally attended most of these meetings to explain the objectives of the security transition, to emphasize the importance of the Liberian security actors exercising full responsibility, to remind the communities of their role in maintaining peace and security, and to assure them of the United Nations continued support.

While we will continue to convey these messages, there is an increasing sense of unease and apprehension among Liberians across the board about the UNMIL drawdown and the prospect of its eventual departure. As Council members are aware, President Johnson-Sirleaf, in a joint letter with President Ouattara of Côte d'Ivoire, urged the Secretary-General to request the Security Council to maintain the quick-reaction force and United Nations forces in both countries until after the elections in Liberia. The events of 13 March in Côte d'Ivoire strengthened the perception among the Liberians of an inadequate local capacity to deal with security threats in Liberia. Three opposition political parties and several civil society organizations, under the umbrella of a joint action committee, called for the postponement of the UNMIL departure until after the elections. This petition was formalized in a memorandum addressed to the Council, which was handed over to me on 11 March.

Concerns remain about the slow pace of key political and institutional reforms that are essential to promoting and sustaining reconciliation. The enhanced political commitment of all Liberian institutions and civil society to constitutional reform, decentralization, land reform and good governance is vital in order to address the root causes of past and potentially future conflicts, and to establish a new compact between the Government and the population it is intended to serve. Lack of action on the various key pieces of legislation is a major cause of the slow progress in the security transition. In addition to the bills already mentioned, other essential pieces of legislation awaiting to be enacted include the land rights act, the land authority act, the local governance act, the gender equity bill, the whistle-blowers protection act, the corrupt offences act and the domestic violence act. I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to members of the Council to call for the expeditious adoption of all these bills. This is the responsibility not of the executive branch alone, but of the Liberian Government as a whole, particularly the legislature.

As UNMIL draws down, it becomes critical to invest in capacity-building and strengthening the rule of law and justice sectors. In that regard, it is important that the Liberian judiciary system, with the support of UNMIL and the international community, intensify efforts to improve the provision of services, ensuring that the population and communities are empowered to settle disputes, and to ensure the protection of their interests. Some additional priorities include the need to reduce the high level of pre-trial detentions, promote justice in relation to children and sexual and gender-based violence, improve conditions in prisons and, last but not least, implement the national human rights plan.

Liberia's long-term security and stability also require continued focus on improving regional cooperation, including cross-border cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire. Both countries enhanced security measures along the border following the fatal clashes related to illicit cross-border farming. These have included the temporary deployment of the armed forces of Liberia to reinforce national security agencies operating in the area. The Liberian Minister of Defence

has indicated the possibility of deploying a joint military operation, together with Ivorian counterparts, to deter cross-border attacks. The issue will be discussed at the quadripartite meeting of the heads of the armed forces of the two countries and the Force Commanders of the two Missions later this month. Such discussions will be held within the framework of the next session of the joint commission for bilateral cooperation between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, as proposed by the Liberian Government.

The second joint council of chiefs and elders of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, held in January, was also a positive development in efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts at the local level through peaceful means. The Mano River Union plan to hold technical and ministerial meetings in Abidjan in April, with the support of UNMIL and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, to discuss enhanced collaboration in the areas of maritime security, border security and counter-terrorism is another welcome development. In the meantime, progress has been achieved in the voluntary repatriation of Ivorian refugees from Liberia. Following the resumption of the process in December, 10,654 of some 37,000 remaining refugees have returned to Côte d'Ivoire so far. We are hoping that tomorrow there will be another 200 refugees returning to their country.

The expected completion of the security transition on 30 June will be one of the most significant milestones for Liberia and the international community since the end of the country's civil war and the signing of the peace agreement in 2003. It will also mark the beginning of a new phase in United Nations engagement in Liberia. However, Liberia and the international community must not lose sight of the still arduous path to a genuinely sustainable peace in Liberia and the region, which will require the long-term engagement and support of the international community.

Before concluding, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, and all members of the Security Council for the strong support being provided to UNMIL and its operations.

The President: I thank Mr. Zarif for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms.Mlambo-Ngcuka.

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka: I visited Liberia three weeks ago, and I am thankful to Angola for the invitation to speak to the Council on the subject today, soon after my visit.

I found that the country has a strong, vibrant democracy and the healthy engagement of different stakeholders. The women continue to be resilient in the face of persisting challenges. We have to applaud the strength of the Liberian democracy since the end of the conflict. It is, however, vital now that we continue to invest in the Liberian people's broader resilience and recovery. The dividends of peace need to flow greater and deeper for women and girls.

Liberian women have earned global fame for helping to bring an end to the civil war, convincing the rebels to lay down arms, consolidating peace and ensuring that the country does not relapse into conflict since the civil war ended 13 years ago. Liberian women today are also known for the extraordinary role they played in halting, reversing and eliminating the Ebola epidemic. I bring the inspiring example of Liberian women when I speak to women from Syria, Colombia, South Sudan, the Central African Republic or the Democratic Republic of the Congo in my travels to conflict-affected countries. Truly, Liberian women are a source of inspiration.

However, Liberian women have yet to benefit fully from the dividends of peace. The absence of war does not mean the presence of complete peace. We have to ask ourselves: What does peace mean to women when they continue to experience high daily levels of sexual and gender-based violence, with very limited access to justice? Only 8 per cent of girls have completed secondary education or higher, and there are reports of alarming rates of sexual abuse and exploitation in schools by teachers and administrators, with total impunity. Whenever I speak with teenagers, they ask me for more female teachers; this call has also been echoed to me by the President. Harmful traditional practices, from child marriage to female genital mutilation and the abduction of girls into the Sande and Poro secret tribal societies, are devastating both to women's lives and the country's recovery. Thankfully, the bill on domestic violence currently before Parliament includes the banning of both female genital mutilation and the end of child marriage. We are anxious that the bill be passed.

The country that elected Africa's first woman President is ranked 149th in female representation in Parliament, and there are even lower rates of women's leadership in local districts, towns, clans and chiefdoms. Again, we appreciate the fact that there is an effort — which needs the Council's support — to

secure a quota ahead of the coming local Government elections so as to increase women's representation and participation. Sexual and gender-based violence continues to be one of the most reported crimes, particularly against minors, yet the overwhelming majority of perpetrators escape justice, despite the hard work of some Government officials and civil society organizations.

The drawdown of our troops must be accompanied by significant investment in and support for a criminal justice system that works and serves the people. In addition, as many of us know, women were disproportionately affected by the Ebola epidemic. They were at the greatest risk of infection because of their roles as caregivers and nurses. Women are proud of their role and share a strong desire to strengthen their health system. In a country where women are a majority of cross-border traders and approximately 85 per cent of daily market traders, many women were suddenly impoverished by border closures, travel restrictions and market shutdowns. These women have called upon us to help them rebuild their trade, which does not require a lot. As the Government Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protections noted, these women were heroes before the Ebola crisis hit. They are now back to zero.

Gains against maternal and infant mortality were quickly reversed by the disruption of basic services. My mission to Liberia was also to look into our support to the effort to provide water, sanitation and hygiene services as an initiative that we are undertaking together with Oxfam International and the Government. The Governments of both Liberia and Sierra Leone are our partners.

The Council is mainly deliberating today on the continuation of the Mission drawdown plans and the future of the United Nations presence in Liberia. There cannot be a vacuum when the Mission leaves. We have to show Liberians that the end of the peacekeeping Mission does not mean that the international community will turn its back on them. There is no better way of showing that than by resolving to invest in those who need us most, who have been most affected by the war and the epidemic and who are also important to a secure post-conflict Liberia. Insecurity and impunity impact girls and women hardest. It is important that we understand and act on that so that no one is left behind.

What I am asking of the international community is to increase its deployment of support to reconstruction, peacebuilding initiatives and the rule of law in order to bring women and girls the justice and peace dividend they have earned. During my visit we launched a five-year joint programme aimed at preventing sexual and gender-based violence that encompasses every important Government actor and a major number of United Nations entities in a great example of coordinated and extensive consultation with the community. The plan, which I have to say is one of the best I have ever seen anywhere, needs our support to succeed, especially in its law-enforcement aspect.

The Government of Liberia, with support from UN-Women and the United Nations country team, has been at the forefront of implementing the Secretary-General's seven-point plan on gender-responsive peacekeeping. Future investments in Liberia's reconstruction must continue to adhere to the commitment to allocating a minimum of 15 per cent of all peacebuilding funds to gender equality. Similarly, we have to ensure that women are included, engaged and participate in the benefits of all the investments in water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure that are planned as part of the recovery from Ebola. We stand ready to support the training that will equip them to be competent partners in ensuring that those services are provided. We should learn from the good practices in the fight against Ebola that were led by women or targeted them so that we can apply them to other epidemics that particularly affect women and girls, such as the Zika virus.

We have supported efforts and provided economic grants for hard-hit cross-border traders, supported orphaned children and stigmatized survivors and ensured that women's needs were reflected in the United Nations humanitarian response. The country's network of women's peace huts, the local peacebuilding mechanism that has been copied in several countries in the region, must continue to receive our support for the needs it still has and in order to ensure that it becomes fully embedded in the local governance system. The country needs thousands of female teachers and midwives for an ambitious economic empowerment programme in support of rural women and to help them relaunch trading activity. Liberia's women need strong justice organizations and security actors to ensure respect for the country's laws.

Even as the Mission continues its drawdown, I must ask it to consider its contribution to gender equality as a key element of its legacy. I am happy to report that

the Liberia country team and the Mission have been planning for an orderly handover of gender-related functions and have consulted and fully integrated their efforts with the UN-Women team and other stakeholders in the country. The Mission has been playing an important role in advancing women's participation in peacebuilding and peace consolidation, while supporting various Government institutions in implementing their commitments to gender equality, advocating for important legal reforms and even building the capacity of women's organizations through quick-impact projects.

UN-Women and the rest of the United Nations family are preparing for the challenging task of inheriting those functions and continuing to move forward. We need the support of the Mission, the Security Council and the international community at large in the crucial next few months, especially in four specific areas. First, as has been mentioned, is the enactment of pending bills on domestic violence, land rights, reproductive health and governance decentralization, which are important to women and gender equality. The second is women's involvement in the decentralization of health, education and agricultural and water and sanitation services. The third is a robust, dependable criminal justice system that can, and must, protect its communities and women. The last is the importance of taking ambitious steps to improve the decreasing representation of women in politics at the national and local levels, including through enforceable quotas and temporary special measures.

That is a short and modest list for a country whose women fought very hard to defeat the rebels and Ebola. We must make sure that gender inequality is also defeated and that their political voices are heard. In very large measure, the future of Liberia depends upon its women and their resilience. That is something that the international community cannot turn away from and must, in fact, take up as strongly as it can, or we will leave with our mission having been fully accomplished.

The President: I thank Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Skoog.

Mr. Skoog: I thank you for the invitation to brief the Security Council this morning on behalf the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Mr. President. I will focus my remarks on the ongoing security transition and the Commission's priorities for its engagement with Liberia in the next few years.

There are many lessons to be learned from previous transitions. We now have a great opportunity to plan for a smooth transition that will put Liberia on a robust path towards further consolidation of peace. There can be no excuses for a fragmented approach on the part of the United Nations system or the international community. We also have a collective responsibility to avoid the financial cliff that has sometimes characterized the drawdown of United Nations peacekeeping operations in the past. Sustained international attention is imperative, both financially and politically. The PBC looks forward to playing its part.

I would now like to turn to the PBC's statement of mutual commitment with the Government of Liberia. In the light of the several transitions under way, our configuration has undertaken to review our engagement to ensure that it is aligned with the Government's current efforts and is adding real value to them. A technical level mission, which included representatives of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Peacebuilding Support Office, the United Nations Development Programme, the Department of Political Affairs and the Chair of the Liberia configuration, visited Monrovia at the end of January. They met with a wide range of Government interlocutors, civil society, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the United Nations country team and the donor community for constructive discussions on peacebuilding needs in Liberia and the role of the Peacebuilding Commission going forward. Our mission reported a clear and widely shared vision of what peacebuilding efforts are needed and clear views on how and where the Commission can play an important role.

At the same time, the mission noted some concerns. The difficult budgetary situation puts a strain on the Government's ability to roll out the key peacebuilding programmes it has identified as priorities. In addition, interlocutors on the ground reported that there was public apprehension about the drawdown of the UNMIL presence. Clear communication to the public and the proper management of perceptions will be important in that regard, as well as assuring them of the enduring commitment of the international community, including the United Nations, to the people of Liberia.

Building on wide consultations, the Peacebuilding Commission affirmed that our engagement's priority

areas remained valid. I will touch on them briefly, starting with security sector reform.

First, in the light of the upcoming drawdown of UNMIL in accordance with resolution 2239 (2015), the PBC will work to support the Liberian Government's efforts to strengthen the operational efficiency of the security agencies in the country by helping the Government to address structural challenges and the provision of justice and security to all Liberians. It will be vital to ensure that priority activities within the Government of Liberia's plan for UNMIL's transition are completed on time.

Secondly, on the rule of law, in order to build the effectiveness and the integrity of legal institutions, increase equitable access to justice and strenghten the rule of law, the PBC will support the Government's efforts to address systematic weaknesses in the criminal justice system and weak administrative procedures, and ensure adequate budgetary allocations to capacitate institutions central to security and the rule of law. The Commission will also help advance the constitutional reform process in a timely manner, ensuring robust civic education and civil society engagement.

Thirdly, on reconciliation, as articulated by the Government, reconciliation in Liberia is a multidimensional process of overcoming social, political and religious cleavages, healing the physical and psychological wounds from the civil war, and confronting and addressing historical and structural wrongs, in particular the root causes of conflict. The PBC will strengthen its efforts to expedite the reconciliation process, in close consultation with local actors in Liberia.

Fourthly, on elections, the PBC will focus its work on the upcoming 2017 elections, which represents a significan opportunity for further democratic consolidation. We will support the efforts of the Government and the National Elections Commission to ensure that the elections are successfully conducted and further contribute to improving governance, reconciliation and stability. This will depend on efforts to enable the widest possible public awareness and participation, as well as deployment of preventive measures ranging from formal mechanisms for electoral dispute resolution to regular channels for dialogue between the security forces and the population.

Last but not least, the PBC has a responsibility to highlight socioeconomic needs that are fundamental to building sustainable peace. As Liberia is still recovering from the economic effects of the Ebola virus disease and the severe impacts of the drop of commodity prices on raw materials, there is a need to reinvigorate the economy by strengthening the private sector, create jobs and build capacity for domestic revenue generation. We will work to strengthen our engagement with the international financial institutions in this regard. The decentralization process, which is a cross-cutting issue in our work, will be important not only to strenghtening State presence and authority outside of Monrovia, but also to extending the provision of basic social services. I look forward to highlighting such issues over the coming 12 months.

Through our statement of mutual commitments, we seek to align the work of the Commission behind existing commitments, rather than duplicate efforts by creating new ones. We will work to draw attention to and rally international support around commitments made in strategic frameworks, such as Liberia Rising, the Liberia Agenda for Transformation, the Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation and, equally important, around the constitutional review process, the draft legislation related to land rights and administration, local governance, decentralization and civil service reform. These important pieces of legislation cut to the core of peace and State-building and have the potential to transform State and society relations in Liberia, provided that they move forward.

The Commission commits to undertaking political advocacy and accompaniment, advocating for generating necessary resources and fostering coordinated actions among all relevant stakeholders. The Commission will continue to promote and integrate a strategic and coherent approach to peacebuilding and serve as a forum for dialogue for all relevant actors. In particular, the configuration will draw and sustain international attention to and support for the preparations for the 2017 elections and continue to highlight peacebuilding issues during the ongoing security transition.

Before concluding, let me make a few recommendations to this body. In light of the upcoming drawdown of UNMIL, we encourage the United Nations system, to the widest extent possible, to engage in joint strategic planning for a well-managed transition and for meeting long-term peacebuilding needs during and beyond the transition. In addition, we emphasize the need to take into account regional dimensions of

peacebuilding and the importance of working together with the Economic Community of West African States and the Mano River Union and of building on successful regional initiatives.

I would like to make the case for including women and youth in all peacebuilding efforts as we move forward. operationalizing resolution 2250 (2015). Executive Director Mlambo-Ngcuka has just made a very impressive intervention, which is very compelling and convincing as to including women as we move forward. I also think that we need engage the large youth population, as it constitutes one of the greatest assets for Liberia's work to consolidate peace and to move forward with confidence.

In conclusion, the Peacebuilding Commission remains determined to advance Liberia's peacebuilding agenda, as outlined by the Government, and is reinvigorated by the renewed commitment showed by all actors through the process of revising our strategy of engagement. We look forward to supporting the efforts of the Security Council in ensuring a well-managed drawdown.

The President: I thank Ambassador Skoog for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Liberia.

Mr. Patten (Liberia): It is a privilege for me to participate in a meeting of the Council on the work of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). I wish to convey the deep gratitude of the Government and the people of Liberia to the Council for its continued support of peace and stability in Liberia. In the same vein, I wish to commend Mr. Farid Zarif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and the entire UNMIL family for the many contributions they are making in the consummation of peace and stability in Liberia. I wish to further thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his statement, which has given further insights into the work of UNMIL.

Similarly, I wish to thank the Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Ambassador Olof Skoog, for his statement. The work of the PBC has been critical to sustaining peace in Liberia. The statement draws on the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders on the new statement of mutual commitments. We endorse the recommendations in the statement.

I also wish to thank the Executive Director of UN-Women for her statement. We appreciate the ongoing attention and support that the women of Liberia continue to receive from UN-Women.

Thirteen years after the civil conflict, significant progress has been made in Liberia in the areas of peace and security, with the support of UNMIL. With stability established, focus has now shifted to economic and social development and governance reforms. The thirty-first progress report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/169) provides a fairly accurate report of the situation in Liberia and a level of preparedness of Liberian security institutions to assume from UNMIL the full security responsibilities of the country come 30 June. As of 15 March, the Government of Liberia has assumed full responsibility for six of the eight UNMIL responsibilities. We therefore thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the support of UNMIL in furtherance of the implementation of the Government's transition plan.

I wish to affirm that UNMIL has been a significant and dependable partner, creating a platform for continued dialogue and assistance as we implement the transition. Steady progress has been made in the areas of training and capacity-building of the Liberian National Police, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization and other security institutions, and the deployment of officers to various countries has begun. As of January, additional Liberian National Police officers, including emergency response and police support units, have been deployed in eight border counties to address threats to peace, including cross-border threats. Additional logistical support, including vehicles, communication equipment and uniforms, has been supplied.

Not only is it important to enhance the numerical capacity of both the police and immigration services, but renewed focus has also been placed on the quality of training they receive. The ability of the national police to plan and carry out training is essential to bolstering the capacity of the police. The protection of human rights and civilians, which remains paramount to the work of the security institutions, has gained added traction by planners and training being made available to the relevant institutions in this area. Other aspects of the training being provided by the institutions are focused on leadership and management, border-control management, human trafficking, immigration law, and so on. The Liberian Government is optimistic that all activities under UNMIL that have not been taken over

by the relevant security institutions will be taken over by 30 June.

We acknowledge that corruption remains a challenge and a threat to governance. However, the Government of Liberia is not relenting in the fight to defeat it, through the support of the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission and the Ministry of Justice. Since our previous statement in the Council (see S/PV.7519), a number of Government officials — including the Managing Director of the National Port Authority, the former Minister of Commerce and the former Managing Director of the Liberia Petroleum Refining Company — have been indicted on corruption charges. Last week, the President dissolved the board of directors of the Liberian chapter of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in relation to the expenditure of funds donated for the Ebola disease. In a case of economic sabotage related to private use permits, convictions have been obtained against the former Managing Director of the Forestry Development Authority, Moses Wogbeh, and other senior managers, who were convicted and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment and ordered to pay approximately $6 million in restitution. The former Comptroller of the National Drug Service was found guilty of economic sabotage and theft of property, sentenced to five years' imprisonment and ordered to pay $179,000 and LRD 958,000 in restitution. There is also a case involving the former board of directors of the National Oil Company of Liberia and some senior officers. Currently ongoing at the Temple of Justice is the corruption case involving the suspended Managing Director of the National Port Authority, Matilda W. Parker and the former Comptroller Christina Palay.

Liberia's transformative agenda also remains on course. This vision is firmly embedded in the resolve of the Government to introduce extensive changes in the areas of governance, the rule of law, education, infrastructure and health care. Following the submission of its report to the President, the recommendations from the work of the constitutional review process are now before the national legislature. A number of bills have been submitted to, and are under consideration by, that body, including the local Government act, the land rights act, the police act and the immigration act, as well as many other bills that are earmarked for enactment into law, including bills related women. While there have been some delays in taking action on those bills by the legislature, the Government of Liberia is confident that they will soon be passed into law.

It has been a couple of months since Liberia was declared Ebola-free. Now safe as a result of the global efforts that were exerted to defeat the scourge, thousands more Liberians could have succumbed to the pandemic. Even though Ebola has been overcome, the direct consequences of the disease, exacerbated by the global economic decline and the decrease in prices of the country's main export commodities — rubber and iron ore — have devastated the economy, leading to a reduction of over $70 million in projected revenues for the 2015-2016 fiscal year, and budget cuts across all levels of Government. That has made it difficult for the Government to fully implement its transformation agenda as planned.

When the Security Council requested that Liberia assume full security responsibility by June 2016, Liberia did not expect that the financial burden for that transition would be borne by it alone. Since the adoption of the plan by the Council, only Sweden and the European Union have contributed directly to it, in spite of the appeal by the Council for support. Liberia wishes to therefore call on the international community, donors and partners to lend their support to this worthy cause.

Let me now turn to the letter written by President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and her Ivorian counterpart, President Alassane Ouattara, to the Security Council. Concerns have been raised by many Liberians about the security of the country as we approach the 2017 elections. Those concerns, which find support in many quarters, are based on the perception that the departure of UNMIL would create a security vacuum. That negative perception has been reinforced by the recent terrorist attack in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, the news of the relocation of the United Nations rapid response force stationed in the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire from Abidjan to Mali, and the planned presidential elections in 2017.

While it is the view of the Government that State security institutions are being prepared to carry out their duties during such a critical time, it is important to address that negative perception. The Government of Liberia proposes that the Council consider maintaining a deterrent force in Liberia — not troops on the ground to engage in combat but a force sufficient to provide psychological support and a cushion up to the 2017

elections. The force could be a subregional force. The presence of a United Nations force on the ground coupled with community policing will help create an enabling environment for peace, the conduct of general elections and the seamless handover to an elected Government. It is therefore desirable, in the light of the prevailing environment, for the Security Council to give some thought to the issues raised in the letter by the President.

In conclusion, it is important to stress that the terrorist attack that took place in Côte d'Ivoire over the weekend has led to cause for concern in Liberia. Given the fragility of our security institutions, we call on the international community to urgently lead coordination efforts with the relevant stakeholders, including regional and subregional groups, on how to ensure that terrorists do not find a foothold in the region.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite the Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.